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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1528
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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 2369
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PAKISTAN/OBAMA PRESIDENCY, SRI LANKA, PAKISTAN, IRAN, PALESTINE, AFGHANISTAN; NEW DELHI.

This countrywide cable reports on relevant media reaction/opinion from India's large non-English press. The Mission reports on English-language media via email through the daily "Early Edition" summary.

PAKISTAN/OBAMA PRESIDENCY

1. "INDIA'S EXPECTATIONS For OBAMA" op-ed article by former diplomat Rajendra Abhyankar in the February 6, 2009, Mumbai edition of centrist Marathi daily SAKAAL. "It is welcome that the new U.S. President feels that Pakistan needs to play a more positive role in the interest of peace and stability in South Asia, especially in Afghanistan. Obama's decision to appoint Richard Holbrooke as the U.S. envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan is also a rewarding one, more so because he has not been entrusted with the responsibility of Kashmir. In fact, Pakistan wanted Kashmir to fall within Holbrooke's jurisdiction. Obviously, India feared a resurgence of America's Kashmir policy (that proved distinctly unfavorable to India) that prevailed during the Clinton administration. Obama has allayed fears on that count as of now... during the Bush years, the U.S. treated Pakistan and India as separate entities. This policy was welcome as India has a justifiable reason for not wanting to be treated on par with an ever-erring neighbor. But India now expects much more from Obama. India not only wants to be differentiated from Pakistan, but the U.S. also needs to bring Pakistan to task in the context of terrorism..."

SRI LANKA

¶2. "LESSON FROM SRI LANKA" editorial in the February 6 Guwahati Assamese left-of-center ASAMIYA PRATIDIN. "Given the current situation it is apparent that the LTTE's dream of establishing an independent Tamil state will never materialize... it may not be possible to eliminate the LTTE altogether but certainly it will not regain its earlier position. All those terrorist organizations, which drew inspiration from the LTTE, now should learn their lesson from the LTTE's predicament. A handful of people can never establish an independent entity within a country by fighting against a large army. On the contrary, they turn the country into a slaughterhouse of humanity."

PAKISTAN

¶3. "PAKISTAN'S BEHAVIOR" editorial in the February 6 Guwahati Assamese independent ASAMIYA KHABOR. "No doubt formal relations between India and Pakistan deteriorated after the Mumbai terror attacks. But there exists a parallel relationship which is still warm... the representatives of Pakistan's civil society are pressuring its government not to hide its wrong-doing,

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but rather take steps to identify and punish the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks. Despite criticizing the Pakistan government, the common people of India should reciprocate this positive attitude of their neighbors by maintaining cordial relations. Peace can only then prevail in the sub-continent."

IRAN

¶4. "IRAN'S SATELLITE: BIG QUESTIONS," editorial in the February 5 centrist NAVBHARAT TIMES Hindi daily: "Iran's satellite launch has raised concerns. The launch marked the 30th anniversary of the Islamic revolution. Six major powers, which are trying to persuade Tehran to suspend its nuclear program, have expressed concern. They fear that Iran could use this technique for manufacturing long-range missiles tipped with nuclear warheads... Iran is accused of not halting its uranium enrichment program because it wants to manufacture nuclear weapons and become a superpower in the Middle-East. Thus, Iran is facing UN sanctions. Since these sanctions are affecting Iran's economy, it has given indications that it can hike oil prices. If it happens, it will get the entire world into trouble. Iran's arm-twisting can, certainly, be dangerous, but Iran should also clear doubts about its space and nuclear programs and prove that it is a supporter of peace in the world."

¶5. "IRAN CANNOT BE COMPARED WITH LIBYA", editorial in the February 5 right-of-center Urdu daily URDU TIMES, Mumbai: "In order to sabotage the Islamic revolution in Iran, a war thrust upon it in 1980 -- just a year after the revolution -- lasted eight years. Despite this, the economic, social, civil and defense advancement of Iran is tremendous. No country in the world outside Japan, China and Germany can be considered on par with Iran. The recent satellite launch is the greatest proof of Iran's success. In fact, comparison of Iran's liberal Islamic revolutionary leadership with autocratic Libya, which is terrified of the West, is an insult to Iran. Only someone like Jonathon Power could dare inflict such an insult. As far as the Palestine issue is concerned, Palestine is for

Palestinians, and everything except that truth is an oppression and trespass, and is bound to die its own death one day."

PALESTINE

¶6. "PROBLEMS OF HAMAS", editorial in the February 6 right-of-center Urdu daily MUNSIF, Hyderabad: "It is an established fact that Israel considers Hamas its greatest enemy, and the first and foremost mission of Israel, at present, is to liquidate Hamas by all means. The Israeli government and political parties are so terrified of Hamas that the latter has become a hot issue amidst the upcoming elections in Israel. Former President Bush has vilified those who are fighting for their motherland,

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whether they are in Palestine, Chechnya or elsewhere. These activists are now branded as terrorists. Mujahids and militants of yesterday are now called Palestinian terrorists. This causes a decrease in sympathy with Hamas at international levels. Some Arab countries are hand in glove in conspiracies hatched against Hamas. But Hamas is destined to stand victorious, since they are right and true."

¶7. "PALESTINE IS IN NEED OF REAL JUSTICE", editorial in the February 5 right-of-center Urdu daily INQUILAB, Mumbai: "Obama is a silver lining in the dark clouds hovering over the Middle - East. It seems that his administration will try to ensure the progress in establishing peace in the region, but will it try to provide justice to Palestinians? Will it help them to get back their land? Will it take interest in solving the crucial issue of Palestinian refugees and will it honor their sentiments and aspirations? These are some of the questions which need positive and constructive responses to create a hopeful horizon in the Mid-East; otherwise, any expectation of Obama's administration will be futile and worthless. Obama's special envoy for the Middle-East is on his tour to the region. He did not consider it necessary to meet the Hamas leadership. It is not a healthy sign. It depicts the same narrow-mindedness, which is not suitable at all for the peace process in the war torn region. Doesn't Obama want to bring Hamas to the table because it is truthful, keeps real questions of peace and justice in consideration, and has the honor of being the representative party of Palestinian people?"

AFGHANISTAN

¶8. "FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN", editorial in the February 6 right-of-center Urdu daily RASHTRIYA SAHARA, New Delhi: "At present, the United States of America does not want to hear the stories of its defeats. That is why it is making all out efforts to create such a situation in Afghanistan, before its retreat, that the Taliban will not be able to reestablish their authority in Afghanistan -- and if they gain strength, they will be restricted to a limited region in the country. With this aim, the United States of America has adopted a policy of leaving Afghanistan only after turning it into a vast battle field -- the same policy it had adopted in Iraq. The Afghan history stands witness that no power in the world can occupy its rocky land. America, like Britain and Russia, is about to leave Afghanistan, but at the same time it wants a face-saving retreat. That is why it wishes to create the same situation as Russia created in the past. However, it is quite certain that major powers of the world, who write the destiny of Muslim countries, will never want to provide the Muslim world with an opportunity to rest peacefully, quietly and calmly."

